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# THE OLD TESTAMENT AT THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY.

BY JOHN B. DAISH.

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One reason for the present revival of Old Testament study may be seen in the interest that has of late years been taken in Jewish history. Men like Draper have shown that the world is far more indebted to the Jew than most writers are willing to confess; that we owe our educational system and the mediæval schools partly to the influence of the Jews at Alexandria. The seeds of education were by them planted among the Moors and by them were carried to Spain. From that new starting-point culture was extended to all Europe.

The Old Testament is of incalculable importance in finding out the condition of primitive man and of man in the patriarchal stage—two subjects to which historians of the type of Sir Henry Maine have devoted a large amount of study and thought.

The importance of the present renaissance of biblical study cannot be overestimated. The fifteenth century had its Revival of Letters, a return to the Greek language and culture; the nineteenth century has her Revival of Letters, the return to Hebrew and the Old Testament.

The universities and colleges have taken an active part in the study of the Old Testament. The Johns Hopkins University has long had as one of its requirements in the historical department a year's course in Church History. A foundation for such a study is made in the earlier part of the session by a study of Jewish history as essential to a proper understanding of how Christianity grew out of Judaism. The enduring relation between the two, the influence of the Hebrews from the time of the fall of Jerusalem down to the present Jewish Question, is dwelt upon.

Early in the academic year of 1887-88 a movement was instituted for the more special study of the Old Testament. Dr. Herbert B. Adams, who lectures to the undergraduate class in church history, has long been much interested in the history of the Hebrews. A plan was soon worked out by which the study of the Old Testament was to be privately promoted among the students. Interest was aroused among them by reading the opinions of the various College Presidents and professors, on the value of this branch of study, published in **THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT**. The movement met with hearty approval by members of the "Christian Association" of the University, the leaders of which were prominent in taking the initiative in the whole matter.

The proposition was to meet fortnightly for one hour and a half on Sunday afternoons. Meetings thus infrequently held gave men already busy with collegiate work time to read something on the subject and to obtain new ideas which might be given to the class. At first, meetings were held by the courtesy of Dr. Adams in his private rooms. Students were invited by him for their known interest in the subject. The number of the class averaged fifteen, of whom all but three were

graduate students. The undergraduates were men who had taken a very marked interest in church history. It might be supposed that the students invited were exclusively from the historical department, but such was not the case. Men who had read fragments of Ulfilas Bible and had translated old Norse and Anglo-Saxon sat beside historical students; while men representing the various departments of physical science were also present. One important feature was the presence of two Japanese students, who on occasion related to the class certain myths of the Orient. Orientalists puzzled the brains of some of the members by explaining at great length the shades of meaning in various words in the first chapter of Genesis, but philosophical testimony in deciding points of dispute was invaluable. Besides the advantage derived from the various specialties of members, there was some benefit in the religious denominations represented. The class included a variety of creeds, from that of a Roman Catholic to that of an orthodox Jew. Breadth of vision was brought into the discussion. Every one was allowed to come to his own conclusions. Dogmatism was discouraged; toleration was regarded with favor. Later on, as the attempt showed itself to be of decided benefit, new members were invited and, ultimately, when the class had its meetings in one of the University buildings, a larger number of students were invited.

The plan for study was devised by Dr. Adams; the idea was to touch on great topics, to study historical landmarks and to leave it to the individuals to fill in the landscape. The topics considered were of this nature: Science and Genesis; Science and Man; Biblical and Babylonian accounts of the Flood; the Babylonian Background of Hebrew History; Egypt and the Hebrews; Phœnicia and Israel; Hebrew Law; Constitutional History of the Hebrews; Hebrew Culture; Continuity of Hebrew Influence. One of these subjects was taken up at each meeting. Citations were made from such extreme authorities on the one hand as Wellhausen and Renan, and on the other from more orthodox writers. After giving the chief points of the various writers, Dr. Adams asked for opinions upon specific questions and for any new information the members had acquired in their reading during the two weeks previous, each subject being given out in advance. One member of the class was appointed to keep a bibliography of the various subjects.

The scheme proved of great advantage to the class. Men found that amid differences of sect all were striving for a common end. They acquired new methods of biblical interpretation, received new ideas, and acquired a breadth of view which is of paramount importance to the student. Linguists became acquainted with historical methods of interpretation. Men of the Occident learned the legends of the Orient. Those whose knowledge of science and scientific methods was slight became familiar with modern geological and ethnological views of Genesis.